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ENGINEER'S BOOKSHELF

A PIECE OF FINE WRITING

"WHERE THE BLUE BEGINS," by Christopher Morley. Copyright, 1922, by Doubleday Page & Co.

REVIEWED BY M. A. LOOFBOURROW

Christopher Morley is an ingenious writer. Every sentence, every expression shows his individuality, his naive and vivid style. His humor is never failing; the lines without any open display seem to chuckle down within themselves. By the mere placing or displacing of a word he forces an inward smile. The quiet subtlety of his humor gives it charm; the reader feels an egoistic satisfaction that he is so keen as to perceive these deft shadings.

This most recent story of Mr. Morley's is no more than a fairy tale for grownups. It is a delightful bit of reading to one who takes literature casually; it is a deep, practical bit of philosophy to the keener thinker. The author, by means of an unusually artful allegory, draws the living story of the most common unhappiness and mental ailment in the world today—the unending search for pleasure and a success that will not fade with attainment. The way he tells of that search seems to laugh at the human race as a whole; yet there is a touch of introspection which makes one think that the author laughs at himself also.

To tell the characters the author employs to carry out his tale would detract from a review of the book. The story might be considered a petty narrative, whereas, in reality, it can give the most profound thinker food for thought. Try this novel—it is scarcely a novel, either—try it some time when you have a few spare moments. The book is not too long, and the lightness of the humor that is woven into it, along with the darker allegorical shade of philosophy, make an amusing, interesting hour or two of reading.

"RELATIVITY AND SPACE," by Charles P. Steinmetz. Cloth binding, 122 pages. McGraw-Hill Book Co., New York, 1923. Price \$2.00.

REVIEWED BY F. V. HUNT, '25

Books and books have been written about Einstein's notorious theory of relativity from misnamed "easy lessons" to abstract mathematical monographs on the subject, all of which avail the general public equally little regarding the real nature of the theory. It is, therefore, a genuine relief to find this clearly written little volume which actually gives the innocent reader a chance. The very association of names involved in a Steinmetz treatment of Einstein's theory arouses an attitude of pleasant expectancy that soon becomes delightfully satisfied. Relativity and space inevitably contains a few equations, but is essentially non-mathematical and can easily be understood by anyone who can read simple algebraic relations.

The author has divided the book into four "lectures," which deal with different phases of the subject. The first lecture is quite general and contains but little more than appeared in the newspapers about 1920. The second division is especially pregnant with little-understood ideas very clearly explained. Steinmetz discards the ether with logical nonchalance, conceives of energy storage in empty space, and presents the clearest discussion of the fourth dimension we have yet found any place. A discussion of the new conception of gravitation occupies the third lecture and involves such unique problems as the deflection of a beam of light, estimation of the volume of the universe, and a determination of the length of a straight line. The fourth lecture is slightly more abstract and deals with the characteristics and curvature of space, a thing in itself difficult to conceive and yet splendidly presented.

This is a book which will yield almost as much information and varied viewpoint on the fifth reading as on the first and we can heartily recommend it to anyone who is interested in the subject.

WHAT'S WRONG WITH THIS LETTER?

"WHEN YOU WRITE A LETTER," by Thomas Arkle Clark, Dean of Men and Professor of Rhetoric, University of Illinois. Copyright, 1921, Benj. H. Sanborn & Co.

This volume is the result of the author's thirty years of experience in writing letters and in teaching high school students and college undergraduates how to write acceptable ones, and, Dean Clark adds, in waiting months and years for the letter which was expected but never came.

It is astounding how many poor letters the average college student writes during his four years, and there is no reason to believe that he improves any on contact with the proverbial cold world. Few students will concern themselves with complicated theories of grammar and structure any more than enough to pass the next mid-term and, consequently, when they have a practical application of their theories, they are lost; they know their letter is wrong in lots of ways, but cannot bring to bear any previous experience or studies to improve it. "*When You Write a Letter*" will get you out of just such a hole and sooner or later you will be in it. You can ask the old man for a check in a manner that is brief and to the point, your knowledge of this type of letter may be exhaustive, yet the day comes to all of us when we must write our first real business letter, usually an application. This book is full of suggestions as to just when, where and how it should be done.

The book covers all portions of the letter-writing field likely to be of concern to most of us.

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There is first a discussion of letter writing in general, which is very interesting, for the points are wrapped up in illustrations and humorous incidents which make them very easy to take; you do not realize that you are learning anything, consequently you have no prejudice against it. Materials and form next come in for considerable mention. After reading this you will realize how easy it is to go wrong in this matter, and it is to be hoped that you will also be able to make fairly intelligent selection of both. We now are ready to find out about the four main groups of letters, which are: The friendly letter, the business letter, formal notes and letters of courtesy. Personally we prefer to write to our friends in our own way, unhampered by any thoughts of the proper thing, but in writing formal notes and letters of courtesy there are standards of social practice which it is well to observe; in fact, nobody, regardless of his religion, race, politics, philosophy or environment—likes to make a mistake of this kind, though he may loudly proclaim that he is indifferent and contemptuous of all social custom. Everybody agrees that the ability to write an effective business letter is of great practical advantage, and that lack of this ability is equally a handicap in business life.

If you have no interest in the improvement of your correspondence, or if you are already too good in that way for any assistance you could get from a book of this scope, then read it anyway for your own personal enjoyment. It is really quite interesting. And whether you class yourself with the former or the latter, you are certain to learn a thing or two.